

Howard Place (Mayhurst)
U. S. Rt. 15
Orange vicinity
Orange County
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1082

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Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HOWARD PLACE (MAYHURST)

HABS No. VA-1082

Location: U. S. Rte. 15, approx. 1/4th mile S. of town of Orange
Orange County
Virginia

Present Owner: Estate of Olive M. Daniel

Present Occupant: Unoccupied.

Present Use: Unoccupied.

Statement of Significance: Mayhurst is an excellent example of the 'Bracketed Style' of Victorian architecture in Virginia. Although retaining many elements of classical design, such as the strict symmetry and Georgian plan, the details exhibit the exuberant spirit associated with Italianate Victorian architecture.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners. The land on which "Mayhurst" stands was originally part of the 6500 acre grant to John Baylor in 1726. Charles P. Howard dealt in land in the vicinity of Orange between 1800-1840, and it was during this time that he purchased the "Mayhurst" land consisting then of 889.59 acres. After his death in 1856 the land was sold to John Willis of Orange County, Virginia, for \$23.75 an acre. John Willis built the house on the land in 1859-60, naming it "Howard". The Willis family enjoyed an affluent life for a short time only. The war brought hardships on them, and they sold the house and 644 1/2 acres in 1867 to Latham L. Higgins of New York City for \$29,000. The house was sold again in 1870 to Daniel Hubbard of New Orleans, for a price of \$21,000 for the house and 600.81 acres. In 1902 William G. Crenshaw paid \$26,000 for the mansion and 585 acres of land. The house underwent a name change to "Mayhurst" as well as numerous renovations during the ownership by the Crenshaws between 1902 and 1932, when it was sold to Olive Madden Daniel for the price of \$19,000 which included 447.70 acres of land. "Mayhurst" is once again for sale; the asking price for the mansion and 135 acres is \$565,000.
2. Date of erection: 1859-60.

3. Architect: There is no conclusive evidence that any particular architect designed "Mayhurst". Arguments have been made in support of two different architects, although neither has been proved decisively. One suggestion, made by James A. D. Cox, Professor of Architectural History at the University of Virginia, is that Norris G. Starkweather (1818-1885) designed "Mayhurst". This conclusion is based on the similarities between "Mayhurst" and "Camden", a Starkweather house built in 1857 on the banks of the Rappahannock in Caroline County. The most evident similarities are in detailing: the external facing made to simulate stone blocks, the round-headed windows with projecting frames and the brackets all help to give the two houses a similar flavor. Ed Polk Douglas, an architectural historian, has discovered other evidence, still undisclosed, which links Starkweather with "Mayhurst".

William H. B. Thomas, Director of the Orange County Historical Society, however, asserts that Charles Haskins, an architect from the Washington, D.C., firm of 'Haskins and Alexander' is more likely the architect of "Mayhurst". Haskins had worked in the area on buildings such as the Orange County Courthouse and the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Station at about the same time that "Mayhurst" was built, and his influence appears evident in the design and detailing of "Mayhurst."

4. Alterations and additions: A large 'sleeping porch' was added at the turn of the century to the south end of the house as well as additional rooms appended to the west elevation. Many partition walls were added early in the twentieth century providing bathrooms and kitchens and extra bedrooms throughout the house so that it would better serve its purpose as a guest house. An early twentieth century entrance porch replaces the original one.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

See: James A. D. Cox's article "Mayhurst, A Virginia Country House" (Arts in Virginia, Volume 20, Number 2, Winter 1980), and William H. B. Thomas' article, "The Full Tide of Prosperity" (Pioneer America, Volume 1, Number 1, January 1969); both are in the Appendix. (see HABS Field Records)

C. Sources of Information:

1. Interviews.
 - a. Ann Brush Miller
 - b. William H. B. Thomas
 - c. Alex Waugh
2. Bibliography:
 - a. "Mayhurst, A Virginia Country House" by James A. D. Cox, Arts in Virginia, v. 20, no. 2 Winter 1980.
 - b. "Victorian Splendor" by Susan Scott Neal, The Free Lance-Star, Fredericksburg, Virginia, July 7, 1981.
 - c. Letters to the Editor, The Free Lance-Star, Fredericksburg, Virginia, July 1981.
 - d. History of Orange County, by W. W. Scott, Regional Publishing Co., Baltimore, 1974.
 - e. "The Full Tide of Posterity" by William H. B. Thomas, Pioneer America, Volume 1, Number 1, January 1969.
3. Papers:
 - a. Orange County Deed Books 45, 46, 47, 60, 63, 73, 104, as cited by Ann Miller.
 - b. Orange County Will Book 12, as cited by Ann Miller.
 - c. Orange County Patent Book 12, as cited by Ann Miller.
 - d. Bruce F. Herndon and Associates, Realtors.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is an excellent example of the bracketed style of Victorian architecture in Virginia.
2. Condition: Good.

B. Description of Exterior.

1. Overall dimensions: The main structure measures 56'4" x 38'7"; the semi-octagonal projection on the south elevation measures 11'5" x 8'5". The twentieth century porch measures 9'9" x 19'2"; the indentation on the west elevation measures 5'7" x 11'0".
2. Foundation: There is an English basement, three feet thick; exposed brick walls with symmetrically-disposed openings are aligned with the openings of the upper floors.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: The basement walls are exposed brick, painted white. The hollow eighteen-inch thick exterior frame walls are covered entirely by rusticated wooden siding, beveled to resemble ashlar stonework, and painted white.
4. Structural system, framing: The wood frame two-story structure shows evidence of the use of joinery and balloon frame construction.
5. Porches and projections: A twentieth century entrance porch with decorative brackets and railings shelters the front door and provides a balcony for the story above. About 1911, additional rooms were added to the west elevation of the house, where there had been a porch, and a major sleeping porch annex was appended to the south elevation. Original to the house are two small balconies which project from the two sets of twin-arched windows on the main floor of the east elevation. An enclosed five-section, one-story oriel bay extends from the south elevation.
6. Chimneys: The roof is surmounted by three large chimneys which display an ornate treatment in the brickwork, consisting of three recessed panels separated by projecting brick patterns.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors. The entrance, centrally positioned in the east elevation, consists of a double door with an elliptical-arched fanlight and sidelights which frame the doorway. Originally two doors opened into two rear rooms from a western porch on the main floor; the twentieth century additions have obscured their function as exterior doors. The basement retains two exterior doors in the rear elevation.
- b. Windows. There are ten different types of windows in the main structure. These include single and twin double-hung, round-headed windows with heavy articulated moulded arch surrounds; double-hung Palladian windows with bracketed lintels and sills, oculi with moulded arch surrounds; eight-paned rectangular casement windows and six-over-nine rectangular double-hung windows. The twentieth century additions have four-over-four double-hung windows.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering. The structure has a hipped roof, sheathed with tin. Centrally placed gables on each elevation are surmounted by Finials, and heavy, curvilinear brackets decorate the wide overhang.
9. Belvedere. An octagonal belvedere sits upon a square drum in the center of the hipped roof. The larger sides of the gazebo have tall, triangularly-headed double-hung windows flanked by smaller rectangular windows. The clipped corners of the structure, forming smaller sides, have recessed rectangular panels. The roof shape of the belvedere echoes that of the house. Its decorative treatment is similar, though all elements are smaller and less ornate in keeping with the miniaturized scale. An ornate finial, an elaboration of the main house's gable finials, crowns the composition.

C. Description of Interior.

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement. This floor consists of a kitchen, pantry, dining-room, living-room, utility room, bathroom, front and back foyers, a furnace room and two unfinished rooms in the main part of the house; the twentieth century additions on rear elevation and the annex have an office, bathroom, bedroom, livingroom and kitchen.

- b. First floor. The main door opens on to a large entrance hall which houses the only staircase in the house. A graceful elliptical arch resting on Doric piers separates the entrance hall from the inner hall behind it, which has a fireplace and windows which once looked out on the western porch. As characteristic of a Georgian plan, two large rooms flank each side of the center hall. A small semi-octagonal room adjoins the southern parlor. The four main rooms and the center hall of the original house all have ceiling-to-floor windows with original interior shutters and fireplaces with original marble mantels. Twentieth century additions include a sleeping porch and dressing room appended to the main house; two bedrooms, a kitchen and livingroom comprise the southern extension.
 - c. Second floor. Similar to the original plan of the first floor, this floor originally had a large center hall flanked by four large rooms, each with its own fireplace. Numerous partition walls have been constructed, dividing much of the space into smaller units and adding five bathrooms. Twentieth century additions include two small rooms on the rear of the main house.
 - d. Third floor. This floor, which is lighted by small windows in the eaves and circular windows placed in each of the four cross gables of the hipped roof, has had similar partition walls added, changing the original plan to resemble the first two floors by including two bathrooms and a kitchen.
 - e. Fourth floor/belvedere. Almost square in plan, the belvedere is a single room with windows on each side.
- 2. Stairways: The only stair, on the south wall of the entrance hall, is oval in plan, with all the treads radiating from a center point creating a curve at the beginning and end of each flight. There are two octagonal-shaped and turned balusters to a tread. Decorative detail also includes scrolled, uncarved brackets on the riser ends.
 - 3. Flooring: The first storey floors are of random-width oak; the second level are 2 1/2 inch oak and the third level has floors of pine.

4. Wall and ceiling finish. The ceilings are plastered and painted; the walls are plastered and papered.
5. Doorways and doors. Three of the interior doors on the first floor have heavy mouldings in a twin-arched pattern. The other interior doors have more delicate moulding patterns. The simple trim of the door architraves and the doors themselves are painted white.
6. Trim. A baseboard and ceiling cornice trim is seen throughout the house.
7. Hardware. An original brass key box can be found on the entrance door. Glass doorknobs are found on all the interior doors.
8. Lighting. A single central ceiling light is found in each room.
9. Heating. Two oil-fired hot air furnaces heat the original portion of the house.

D. Site.

1. General setting and orientation. Sitting on a high elevation of the 135-acre farm land, the house faces east-southeast.
2. Outbuildings. A two-story hipped roof building with brick infill walls and 6'-10" wide fireplaces in each gable end is situated directly to the west of the main structure. Some doors and door frames may date to the early nineteenth century and may not be original to this structure. Also on the property are two guest houses, the farm manager's residence, a barn with hayloft and a smokehouse.
3. Roads. The original road, leading to the house from the north, is no longer used. A more recent road, leading up from Route 15 circles around the house to the outbuildings behind. The house is approached from a flagstone walk leading directly from the road to the west.

CHAIN OF TITLE

The following is an incomplete chain of title for Mayhurst and the land on which it stands. The transactions from the original grant to the purchase of the land in the early nineteenth century are unknown; the following chain of title does not include the off-conveyances. All of the references are in the Orange County Courthouse.

1726	Grant to John Baylor of 6500 acres. Patent Book 12, p. 499.
1856	Charles Howard's will stated that his property be sold. Will Book 12, p. 211.
July 17, 1856	William C. Moore and Lewis B. Williams, executors of Charles P. Howard's will, grantors; John Willis, grantee. 889-59 acres. Deed Book 45, p. 373.
January 2, 1867	John and Lucy Willis, grantors; Latham L. Higgins, grantee. 644 1/2 acres. Deed Book 46, p. 154.
February 14, 1870	L. L. Higgins and Patty Higgins, grantors; Daniel Hubbard, grantee. 600.81 acres. Deed Book 47, p. 225.
June 11, 1902	Eugenie Hubbard, grantor; William G. Crenshaw, grantee. 585 acres. Deed Book 60, p. 415.
1913-1924	Deeds of trust of Mayhurst. The property was finally released to Ines Cusachs Crenshaw. Deed Book 73, p. 408 and 90, p. 250.
November 2, 1932	Ines Cusachs Crenshaw, grantor; Olive Madden Daniel, grantee. 447.70 acres. Deed Book 104, p. 260.

PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation was undertaken by the School of Architecture at the University of Virginia, under the direction of K. Edward Lay, Professor of Architecture. The material was produced by Rebecca Trumbull, Graduate Student in Architectural History, during the Fall Semester, 1981. The documentation was donated to the Historic American Buildings Survey. It was not produced under HABS supervision, nor edited by members of the HABS staff.